

Message Text

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EXDIS FOR AMBASSADOR YOUNG

FOLLOWING REPEAT BEIRUT 4660 ACTION SECSTATE

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QUOTE

S E C R E T BEIRUT 4660

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, MILI, IS, LE, MOPS

SUBJECT: SOUTH LEBANON

REF: (A) STATE 226335, (B) TEL AVIV 7092, (C) BEIRUT 4614

1. I MET WITH FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS WEDNESDAY MORNING, SEP 21, FOR AN HOUR AND A HALF. I OPENED CONVERSATION SAYING I HAD RECEIVED ANSWERS TO HIS QUESTIONS AND SOME ADDITIONAL CLARIFICATIONS. I ALSO SAID THAT THIS RESPONSE HAD BEEN APPROVED BY ISRAELI PM BEGIN, THAT ISRAELIS HAVE ASSURED US SECRET

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THAT EVERYTHING IS NEGOTIABLE AND THAT QUESTION OF POLICING THE CEASE-FIRE WOULD PROBABLY BE ONE OF THE FIRST SUBJECTS THE ISRAELIS WOULD WISH TO RAISE. I THEN GAVE HIM POINTS FROM PARAS 1 AND 2 OF REF B AS INSTRUCTED REF A. AFTER BRIEFLY GLANCING THROUGH THESE, BOUTROS MADE FOLLOWING REMARKS.

2. THE INCREASED FIGHTING IN THE SOUTH HAS PRODUCED REACTIONS ALL OVER THE ARAB WORLD. THE PLO WILL NOT BE HELPFUL. ALL OUR EFFORTS HAVE COME TO NAUGHT. HE PERSONALLY WAS VERY SAD THAT THE USG WON'T OR CAN'T PUT

THE NECESSARY PRESSURE ON THE ISRAELIS. THE GOL STILL HAS NOT DECIDED WHETHER IT CAN AGREE TO THIS CEASE-FIRE PROPOSAL. IN THE GOL VIEW, IT IS NEITHER EFFICIENT OR PRACTICAL. THE GOL WAS THEREFORE OFFICIALLY RESERVING ITS POSITION.

3. BOUTROS SAID THAT BEFORE MAKING SPECIFIC COMMENTS ON THE POINTS I HAD GIVEN HIM HE WOULD LIKE TO REVIEW WHAT HAD HAPPENED IN THE LAST MONTH. HE HAD INITIATED TALKS WITH THE USG WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SHTAURA AGREEMENT IN SOUTH LEBANON. THE GOL HAD PROPOSED A SCENARIO WHICH THE USG HAD SAID WAS A SERIOUS ATTEMPT TO SOLVE A DIFFICULT PROBLEM AND LOOKED AS THOUGH IT COULD LEAD TO AN AGREEMENT WITH THE ISRAELIS. AFTER NUMEROUS DISCUSSIONS, THE RESIDUAL PLO POSITIONS WHICH WERE AT LEAST 10 KILOMETERS FROM THE BORDER HAD BEEN DESCRIBED AND OTHER DETAILS ABOUT THE VARIOUS FORCES INVOLVED HAD BEEN WORKED OUT. THE ISRAELIS HAD THEN INSISTED ON THE COMPLETE REMOVAL OF THE ARMED PALESTINIAN PRESENCE SOUTH OF THE LITANI AND THE GOL HAD REPLIED THAT SUCH A TOTAL ELIMINATION IS IMPOSSIBLE AT THIS TIME, EMPHASIZING THAT GIVEN THE LIMITED NUMBERS OF PLO INVOLVED AND THE FACT THAT THE LEBANESE ARMY WOULD BE
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PATROLLING THE AREA BETWEEN THEM AND THE BORDER, THERE WAS NO REPEAT NO THREAT TO ISRAEL. WHEN THE ISRAELIS HAD POSED OBJECTIONS, WE HAD CONTINUED OUR DISCUSSIONS TO SEE IF WE COULD FIND A WAY TO OVERCOME THEM. IT HAD TAKEN A LONG TIME AND GREAT EFFORT TO WORK OUT THE SHTAURA AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE GOL AND THE PLO, UNDER THE AUSPICES OF SYRIA. ALL THE GOL HAD ASKED WAS THAT THE ISRAELIS NOT INTERFERE IN THE PALESTINIAN WITHDRAWAL AND PREVENT THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS FROM DOING SO.

4. IN RESPONSE THE ISRAELIS HAD INSTIGATED A SERIOUS ESCALATION IN THE FIGHTING AND THE US WAS NOW SAYING THAT IN THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES IT WAS NOT EASY TO GET APPROVAL OF THE SHTAURA AGREEMENT AND WE PROPOSED AN IMMEDIATE CEASE-FIRE AND NEGOTIATIONS PERHAPS THROUGH ILMAC. THE USG WAS ALSO SAYING THAT WHATEVER COMMITMENT THE ISRAELIS MIGHT GIVE, MORE TALKS WOULD BE NECESSARY. BOUTROS EMPHASIZED THAT WHEN THE GOL SPOKE OF TALKS THROUGH ILMAC, IT MEANT TALKS ABOUT PURELY MILITARY MATTERS AND NO OTHERS. HE DID NOT AGREE IN PRINCIPLE TO THE IDEA OF A CEASE-FIRE SEPARATED FROM THE SHTAURA AGREEMENT; THE US SHOULD GO BACK TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SHTAURA AGREEMENT AND USE ITS CREDIT WITH ISRAEL TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL.

5. CAREFULLY STRESSING THAT HE HAD NOT AGREED IN PRINCIPLE TO THE IDEA OF A SEPARATE CEASE-FIRE, BOUTROS THEN TURNED

TO THE ISRAELI ANSWERS TO HIS QUESTIONS AND THE FURTHER CLARIFICATIONS WHICH I HAD GIVEN HIM AND MADE THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS.

6. RE REF B, PARA 1-B HE SAID THIS IS NOT ACCEPTABLE, PRIMA FACIE. THE GOL IS ALREADY COMMITTED UNDER THE ARMISTICE AND IT WAS NOT THE GOL THAT HAD STARTED MILITARY OPERATIONS. WHY SHOULD THE GOL ANNOUNCE A CEASE-FIRE?

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7. RE REF B, PARA 1-D, BOUTROS SAID THAT HE CANNOT CONSIDER HADDAD A PART OF THE LEBANESE ARMY. HADDAD AND HIS PEOPLE DO NOT TAKE ORDERS FROM THE GOL BUT FROM ISRAEL. IF GOL CONSIDERED HADDAD AND HIS PEOPLE PART OF THE LEBANESE ARMY, THEY WOULD HAVE TO TAKE THE SAME STANCE TOWARDS THE REMAINING REMNANTS OF THE LEBANESE ARAB ARMY AND THIS WAS CLEARLY IMPOSSIBLE.

8. RE "CLARIFICATIONS" (REF B, PARA 2), BOUTROS MADE FOLLOWING COMMENTS. RE POINT B, SINCE ISRAEL ACCEPTS FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR CHRISTIAN MILITIAS HONORING THE CEASE-FIRE, HOW CAN THEY CONSIDER THEM MEMBERS OF THE LEBANESE ARMY? WHAT PRECISELY DOES ISRAEL MEAN IN SAYING IT "WILL HOLD THE GOL RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PLO AND ALL OTHER FACTIONS ON THE OTHER SIDE?" RE PARA D, BOUTROS SAID GOL MUST RESERVE ITS POSITION AND HE HAD NO OBSERVATIONS TO MAKE FOR THE MOMENT. RE PARA F, BOUTROS SAID HE DID NOT UNDERSTAND THE SECOND SENTENCE. (EMBASSY COMMENT: NEITHER DO WE. UNDER SHTAURA AGREEMENT, LEBANESE ARMY UNITS WOULD BE BETWEEN THE PLO AND THE BORDER; THE POSITIONS IDENTIFIED UNDER THE SHTAURA AGREEMENT ARE THOSE THAT THE RESIDUAL PLO UNITS WILL OCCUPY, AT LEAST 10 KILOMETERS FROM THE BORDER. END COMMENT.)

9. RE PARA G, BOUTROS SAID THIS INDICATES A BASIC MISUNDERSTANDING "WHICH IS GETTING WORSE." THE GOL HAS NEVER FORMALLY AGREED TO EVEN THE PRINCIPLE OF NEGOTIATIONS IN THE ILMAC FRAMEWORK AND CERTAINLY CANNOT CONSIDER GOING BEYOND STRICTLY MILITARY DISCUSSIONS IN THIS FORUM. THE ISRAELIS, ON THE OTHER HAND, APPEAR TO BE SUGGESTING MUCH BROADER NEGOTIATIONS. IF THE GOI IS SECRET

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TRYING TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION IN THE SOUTH TO "DRAG" THE GOL INTO SEPARATE PEACE NEGOTIATIONS, BOUTROS SAID, "IT IS QUITE IMPOSSIBLE"; GOL HAS NO CHOICE BUT TO REJECT IT. I MENTIONED THAT GEN. KHOURY HAD INDICATED READINESS TO MEET WITH ISRAELIS UNDER

ILMAC UMBRELLA AND BOUTROS BACKED OFF A LITTLE BUT INSISTED THAT THESE TALKS, IF THEY TOOK PLACE, WOULD CONCERN STRICTLY MILITARY MATTERS. RE POINTS H AND I, BOUTROS REPEATED THAT IF REPEAT IF NEGOTIATIONS ARE AGREED UPON, WE WILL LOOK INTO THE MODALITIES, IT BEING UNDERSTOOD THAT SUCH TALKS WOULD TAKE PLACE ONLY IN THE ILMAC FRAMEWORK.

10. BOUTROS THEN RETURNED TO HIS MAIN THEME THAT USG IS DEVIATING FROM PURPOSE FOR WHICH GOL ORIGINALLY ASKED USG INTERVENTION AND ASSISTANCE. THE LEBANESE HAD ASKED OUR HELP IN PERSUADING THE ISRAELIS NOT TO INTERFERE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SHTAURA AGREEMENT THAT HAD BEEN CAREFULLY WORKED OUT OVER MANY MONTHS BETWEEN THE GOL AND THE PALESTINIANS UNDER SYRIAN AUSPICES. NOW THE ISRAELIS HAD STIRRED UP AN INCIDENT ON THE BORDER WHICH THREATENED TO INVOLVE OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES AND THE US. IN ORDER TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM, WHICH THEY HAD CREATED, THE ISRAELIS WERE NOW SAYING THERE MUST BE AN IMMEDIATE CEASE-FIRE AND NEW NEGOTIATIONS, REOPENING ALL THE QUESTIONS THAT HAD SO CAREFULLY BEEN WORKED OUT IN THE SHTAURA AGREEMENT. THE ISRAELI "CLARIFICATIONS" LOOKED LIKE AN ATTEMPT TO DRAG THE LEBANESE INTO DIRECT POLITICAL NEGOTIATIONS AND POSSIBLY AN ATTEMPT TO NEGOTIATE A SEPARATE PEACE WITH LEBANON. IF I WERE TO MEET WITH WEIZMAN, BOUTROS SAID, "I COULD NO LONGER LIVE IN THE ARAB WORLD." IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO USE ILMAC TO DISCUSS PURELY MILITARY MATTERS BUT ONLY AFTER REPEAT AFTER A CEASE-FIRE HAS BEEN WORKED OUT.

11. I SAID THAT WE BELIEVE AN IMMEDIATE CEASE-FIRE IS ESSENTIAL IN ORDER TO GET THE SETTLEMENT PROCESS
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MOVING AGAIN. BOUTROS REPLIED THAT THE BEST WAY TO RETRIEVE THE SITUATION IS TO GO BACK TO THE FRAMEWORK OF THE SHTAURA AGREEMENT. THE US HAD INITIALLY GIVEN 80 PERCENT APPROVAL OF THE SHTAURA AGREEMENT, BOUTROS SAID, AND THE GOL HAD SINCE IMPROVED IT. WHY DON'T YOU HELP US CARRY IT OUT? THE POLITICAL QUESTIONS, SUCH AS DIRECT POLITICAL TALKS BETWEEN GOL AND GOI MUST BE FROZEN. LEBANON CANNOT BE "NEUTRALIZED"; NO LEBANESE GOVERNMENT CAN MAKE A SEPARATE PEACE. IF THE GOL COULD GET A COMMITMENT FROM THE ISRAELIS NOT TO INTERFERE AND TO HELP WITH THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS, HE THOUGHT THE SHTAURA AGREEMENT COULD STILL BE IMPLEMENTED. THE PALESTINIANS WOULD UNILATERALLY DECLARE A CEASE-FIRE AND BEGIN THEIR WITHDRAWAL. IF THEY FIRED ON THE ISRAELIS OR THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS, THESE UNITS WOULD OF COURSE HAVE THE RIGHT TO SHOOT BACK. AS THE PALESTINIANS WITHDREW, THEY COULD BE REPLACED IN THE BORDER REGION BY GOL FORCES. ONCE THIS PROCESS WAS UNDERWAY, BOUTROS SAID, THE GOL WOULD AGREE TO TALKS

IN THE ILMAC FRAMEWORK TO COORDINATE MILITARY MATTERS, IF THE ISRAELIS REQUESTED THIS. BOUTROS ALSO SAID THAT HE AND SARKIS WOULD STAND BY THEIR COMMITMENT TO TRY FOR A FURTHER PALESTINIAN WITHDRAWAL AT SOME FUTURE TIME IF THE ISRAELIS WOULD AGREE NOT TO INTERFERE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SHTAURA AGREEMENT.

12. IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION, BOUTROS SAID THAT GOL HAD NOT YET APPROACHED THE PLO ON THE MATTER OF AN IMMEDIATE CEASE-FIRE "SO FAR AS HE KNEW." HE EXPLAINED THAT THE GOL IS STILL DUBIOUS ABOUT THIS QUESTION AND DID NOT WISH TO APPROACH THE PLO UNTIL IT HAD MADE UP ITS MIND. WHEN I ASKED WHETHER IN HIS JUDGMENT IT WOULD BE HELPFUL FOR US TO WEIGH IN WITH THE SYRIANS AT THIS POINT IN SUPPORT OF A CEASE-FIRE IN
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PLACE, BOUTROS SUGGESTED THAT WE MIGHT GET IN TOUCH WITH THEM AND SAY THAT WE, THE USG, ARE CONSIDERING TRYING TO ARRANGE A CEASE-FIRE IN PLACE, PENDING FURTHER DISCUSSIONS TO ACHIEVE A SETTLEMENT IN SOUTHERN LEBANON, AND ASK IF THEY THOUGHT THIS PROPOSAL WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE.

13. IN CLOSING, BOUTROS SAID THAT FOR ITS OWN SAKE AND FOR THE SAKE OF LEBANON, THE UNITED STATES SHOULD NOT SIMPLY REMAIN A SPECTATOR ON THIS PROBLEM. DOES THE US THINK IT IS "CLEVER" OF THE ISRAELIS TO STIR UP TROUBLE ON THE EVE OF THE UNGA? THE ISRAELIS ARE ESCALATING THE PROBLEM; NEXT THEY WILL ASK FOR A FORMAL PEACE TREATY WITH LEBANON BEFORE THEY WILL AGREE TO PEACE IN THE SOUTH. AS LONG AS THERE IS FIGHTING IN SOUTH LEBANON, ALL OF THE US MIDDLE EASTERN POLICY WAS IN JEOPARDY. BOUTROS REPEATED THAT THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY OF SOLVING THE PROBLEM OF THE SOUTH IS THE SHTAURA AGREEMENT AND URGED AGAIN THAT WE USE ALL OF OUR INFLUENCE WITH THE ISRAELIS TO SECURE THEIR NON-INTERFERENCE.

14. COMMENT:

A. BOUTROS WAS MORE UPSET AND DISCOURAGED THEN I HAVE EVER SEEN HIM. HE, AND I SUSPECT PRESIDENT SARKIS, SEE THE WORK OF MANY MONTHS CRASHING AROUND THEIR EARS. THEIR LONG AND PAINSTAKING EFFORTS TO SOLVE THE SOUTHERN LEBANON PROBLEM AND TO KEEP IT IN A LEBANESE CONTEXT (WITNESS BOUTROS' SUCCESSFUL EFFORTS TO PREVENT DISCUSSION OF THIS SUBJECT AT THE RECENT ARAB LEAGUE MEETING IN CAIRO) HAVE BEEN DESTROYED BY THE LATEST ESCALATION IN THE FIGHTING, ARAFAT'S APPEAL TO OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES, AND STATEMENTS BY ISRAEL AND VARIOUS ARAB COUNTRIES. THE POSITION OF THE MODERATE PALESTINIANS HAS BEEN WEAKENED AND THE GOL STANDS POWERLESS WHILE ITS CITIZENS ARE KILLED AND WOUNDED AND OTHERS FIGHT OVER ITS TERRITORY IN THE

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SOUTH.

B. I BELIEVE BOURTOS AND SARKIS HAD ALREADY DECIDED, ON THE BASIS OF MY EARLIER PRESENTATION (REF C), THAT THEY COULD NOT ACCEPT A CEASE-FIRE THAT WAS NOT TIED TO THE SHTAURA AGREEMENT. THE ISRAELI "CLARIFICATIONS" SIMPLY REINFORCED BOUTROS' BELIEF THAT THE ISRAELIS ARE TRYING TO TRICK LEBANON INTO DIRECT POLITICAL NEGOTIATIONS, WHICH WOULD BE FATAL FOR LEBANON. BEGIN'S STATEMENT THAT GOI IS READY "TO DISCUSS, WITHOUT DELAY, A GENERAL CEASE-FIRE IN SOUTHERN LEBANON" PROBABLY MAKES THINGS WORSE. AS I UNDERSTAND IT, WHAT BOUTROS IS SAYING IS THAT GOL CANNOT DISCUSS ANY SUCH POLITICAL QUESTION DIRECTLY WITH ISRAELIS; IT CAN ONLY DISCUSS CERTAIN ASPECTS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF A CEASE-FIRE ONCE IT IS IN EFFECT.

C. WHAT BOUTROS WANTS IS FOR US TO GO BACK TO THE ISRAELIS AND PRESS AGAIN FOR THEIR ACQUIESCENCE IN THE SHTAURA AGREEMENT AS ORIGINALLY OUTLINED. IN RETURN FOR ISRAELI COOPERATION, HE IS NOW WILLING TO OFFER AGREEMENT TO TECHNICAL TALKS ON MILITARY MATTERS IN THE ILMAC FRAMEWORK, IF ISRAEL REQUESTS THIS, AS WELL AS HIS EARLIER COMMITMENT TO SEEK AT SOME FUTURE DATE A FURTHER PALESTINIAN WITHDRAWAL, EITHER WITHDRAWAL OF ADDITIONAL ARMED MEN OR WITHDRAWAL OF SOME POSITIONS OR POSSIBLY BOTH. HE SEES NO NEED FOR THE ISRAELIS OR THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS TO ANNOUNCE A CEASE-FIRE; ONCE THE PALESTINIANS HAVE DONE SO, THE ISRAELIS AND CHRISTIAN MILITIAS WILL SIMPLY STOP FIRING UNLESS FIRED UPON. IF THE FIGHTING CONTINUES TO EASE OFF, AND IF BOTH SIDES CAN CLAIM A VICTORY (THE CHRISTIANS STILL HAVE THEIR HILL, THE PALESTINIANS STILL HAVE KHIAM), THIS MIGHT WORK, IF THE
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PALESTINIANS ARE STILL WILLING IMPLEMENT THE SHTAURA AGREEMENT.

D. THE LATEST ESCALATION OF THE FIGHTING IN THE SOUTH BY THE ISRAELIS AND THEIR CHRISTIAN ALLIES IS REGARDED HERE AS A DIRECT CHALLENGE TO THE USG. THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR USED THAT WORD IN DESCRIBING LOCAL REACTION IN DISCUSSION WITH ME SEPTEMBER 21. THE COMMONLY HELD VIEW IN POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC CIRCLES HERE IS THAT IF USG IS UNWILLING OR UNABLE TO ASSIST LEBANON IN IMPLEMENTING THE SHTAURA AGREEMENT, IT CERTAINLY CANNOT BE RELIED ON TO PLAY A POSITIVE ROLE IN THE SEARCH OF AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT.
LANE.

UNQUOTE VANCE".

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